DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 280 EC 307 969

AUTHOR	Markowitz, Joy
TITLE	Braille Instruction. Quick Turn Around (QTA) Forum.
INSTITUTION	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-06-00
NOTE	5p.
CONTRACT	H159K70002
AVAILABLE FROM	Project FORUM at NASDE, 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Tel: 703-519-3800 (Voice); Tel: 703-519-7008 (TDD) (available in alternate formats).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Blindness; *Braille; *Data Collection; Educational Legislation; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Federal Legislation; National Surveys; *Special Education Teachers; State Departments of Education; Student Evaluation; Teacher Certification; Visual Impairments
IDENTIFIERS	*Individuals with Disabilities Educ Act Amend 1997

ABSTRACT

This brief paper summarizes data from a survey of state education agencies (SEAs) on changes related to Braille instruction since the passage of the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Major findings from analyses of the 44 responding agencies include the following: (1) 25 SEAs have counts of the number of students served under IDEA receiving Braille instruction, although these counts are taken in different ways and may or may not include students at the state school for the blind; (2) 11 of the responding SEAs have policies, procedures, or guidelines for evaluating a student's need for Braille instruction; (3) in 26 of the responding states, valid certification in the area of visual impairment qualifies a teacher to provide instruction in Braille, but only 14 states require specific Braille competency; and (4) 29 responding states have a count of the number of personnel who are certified to teach Braille. Overall conclusions suggest that data on the number of students with Braille instructional needs and personnel to address these needs are not readily accessible in many SEAs. (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 444 280

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, INC.

QUICK TURN AROUND

PROJECT FORUM

QTA – A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF A CRITICAL ISSUE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

BRAILLE INSTRUCTION

By
JOY MARKOWITZ

JUNE 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC 307969

Quick Turn Around

Project FORUM

QTA – A brief analysis of a critical issue in special education

Braille Instruction

June 2000

By Joy Markowitz

Purpose

This *Quick Turn Around* summarizes data collected via survey from state education agencies (SEAs) on the topic of ***Braille instruction***. The purpose of the survey was to explore changes related to Braille instruction since the passage of the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Information was received from 44 SEAs during August and September 1999, and updated March through June 2000.

Background and Federal Legislation

When a student with a visual impairment (VI) is ready to read and write, the most appropriate and effective reading and writing media for literacy should be determined by an assessment. A variety of factors (e.g., visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, color vision, family preferences) may be considered by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to determine the appropriate medium of instruction for each student—print or Braille or Braille and print together (Pugh & Erin, 1999). The 1997 Amendments to the IDEA addressed the issue of Braille instruction in the Consideration of Special Factors:

...in the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;... [20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(B)(iii)].

Project FORUM Inquiry

In order to better understand how SEAs are addressing issues related to Braille instruction that are spelled out in the 1997 Amendments to IDEA, Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) queried states on several topics. The topics included: the number of students receiving Braille instruction; policies, procedures or guidelines for evaluating a student's need for Braille instruction; and personnel certified to provide Braille instruction. This inquiry was part of Project FORUM's work on its Cooperative Agreement with the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

A survey was sent to the SEA in all state and non-state jurisdictions in August 1999, and a follow-up survey was sent in March 2000. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia provided information to Project FORUM via the survey.

This document is available in alternative formats. For details, please contact Project FORUM staff at 703-519-3800 (voice) or 7008 (TDD)

EC 307969

Survey Findings

Student Count Procedures

Twenty-five of the 44 responding SEAs have counts of the number of students served under IDEA receiving Braille instruction; however, as might be expected, these counts are taken in different ways and some counts do not include students at the state school for the blind.

Of the 25 SEAs that have relevant counts, 12 indicated that the number of students receiving Braille instruction is collected for the American Printing House for the Blind registry (APH). Six respondents reported that a state VI materials/instructional center maintains this information. Two SEAs receive information directly from teachers, two obtain this information by reviewing IEPs, one receives this information from regional offices, and in one SEA the state vision consultant collects this information.

The updating of the number of students receiving Braille instruction is done annually by 18 SEAs. Two report this information is updated continuously, two upon request, one monthly, one noted it was the first time, and one respondent did not provide this information.

Policies, Procedures or Guidelines for Evaluation

Eleven of the 44 responding SEAs have policies, procedures or guidelines for evaluating a student's need for Braille instruction, and all but one provided copies of this information. The eleven SEAs are: Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Indiana, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. The nature of this guidance varies from a list of questions/issues to address during the evaluation to lengthy manuals with checklists and resources cited. An additional two states do not have guidelines but encourage the use of several published evaluation instruments. Nine states—seven with no existing material—have committees/task forces in place to develop or update policies, procedures or guidelines in this area.

Personnel Issues

In 26 of the responding states, valid certification in the area of VI qualifies a teacher to provide instruction in Braille. Typically, such certification requires at least one college-level course in Braille. In addition to certification in VI, Braille competency is required by 14 SEAs; however, actual implementation of this requirement varies and some states do not have a mechanism to determine competency. Two states that currently do not now require Braille competency have new laws that will go into effect in the next several years. Three of the responding states have no personnel requirements for the teaching of Braille, and one state did not respond to this question.

Of the 44 responding SEAs, 29 have a count of the number of personnel who are certified to teach Braille. In several states, these numbers are considered estimates. Personnel counts are updated on an annual basis in 17 SEAs. These data are updated continuously in seven SEAs, upon request in four, and one state performed a count at Project FORUM's request.

Personnel information related to VI is collected in a variety of different ways. Fourteen SEAs specifically reported that these data are part of their centralized certification or licensure records/databases or collected with other personnel

information. Four states indicated that LEAs send VI personnel information to the SEA, and three respondents said a state VI consultant collects this information. A statewide materials/instructional center for the VI collects personnel data in three responding states. Four SEAs described other methods.

Concluding Remarks

Results from the Project FORUM survey reveal that data on the number of students with Braille instructional needs and personnel to address these needs are not readily accessible in many SEAs. In fact, a relatively small number of states and non-state jurisdictions have procedures in place to determine a teacher's Braille competency. Student and personnel data are necessary to assess whether there are adequate personnel to address educational needs in the area of Braille at the state, regional and national level.

Although only 11 of the 44 responding SEAs have policies, procedures or guidelines for evaluating a student's need for Braille instruction, there are active efforts underway in at least seven more SEAs to develop such guidance.

Pugh, G.S., & Erin J. (Eds.). (1999). *Blind and visually impaired students: Educational service guidelines*. Watertown, MA: Perkins School for the Blind.

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education (Cooperative Agreement No. H159K70002). However, the opinions expressed herein do no necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.
Note: There are no copyright restrictions on this document, however, please credit the source and support of federal funds when copying all or part of this material.

U.S. Office of Special Education Programs